

Proclamation 7378—National Great American Smokeout Day, 2000

November 15, 2000

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

In the 24 years since the American Cancer Society organized the first Great American Smokeout, our country has made encouraging progress in our battle to reduce the devastating human and economic toll that tobacco products take on our society. Today we have a more comprehensive understanding of the dangers of tobacco use and the sophisticated marketing tactics used by tobacco companies, and we have developed more effective methods for helping people break their addiction to tobacco products.

Despite the progress we have made, tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death in our Nation, with more than 400,000 casualties from tobacco-related illness each year. Since the first report of the Surgeon General on smoking and health was issued in 1964, 10 million Americans have died from causes attributed to smoking. More than 50 million Americans are currently addicted to tobacco. Every day, another 3,000 young Americans become regular smokers; of these, nearly 1,000 will die prematurely.

A recent study funded by the National Institutes of Health has shown that young people become addicted to nicotine much more quickly than we previously thought. Adolescents who smoke as infrequently as once a month still experience symptoms of addiction. That is why my Administration has urged the Congress to raise the tax on cigarettes and grant authority to the Food and Drug Administration to limit tobacco marketing and sales to youth. I have also called on all the States to devote a substantial portion of their tobacco settlement funds to reduce youth smoking. Currently, tobacco companies are spending nearly \$7 billion a year to market their products, dramatically more than the Federal Government and all 50 States combined are spending on tobacco prevention and cessation programs.

My Administration has also joined with the American Cancer Society and other public health organizations in calling for public and private health plans to provide coverage for and access to proven tobacco cessation methods. We know that helping people quit smoking produces immediate and long-term health benefits—saving money and saving lives.

National Great American Smokeout Day presents all of us with the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the health and safety of all Americans. Smokers who quit smoking for the duration of the day can lead by example and take the first crucial step toward better health. Nonsmokers can teach children about the dangers of using tobacco and strengthen our Nation's efforts to eliminate young people's exposure to secondhand smoke. Through efforts like the Great American Smokeout and the implementation of proven tobacco prevention programs, we are moving toward my Administration's goal of cutting smoking rates among teens and adults in half within the decade.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 16, 2000, as national Great American Smokeout Day. I call upon all Americans to join together in an effort to educate our children about the dangers of tobacco use and to take this opportunity to practice a healthy lifestyle that sets a positive example for young people.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

William J. Clinton

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Remarks at Vietnam National University in Hanoi, Vietnam

November 17, 2000

Thank you very much, and good afternoon. I can think of no more fitting place to begin my visit at this hopeful moment in our common history than here at Hanoi National University. I was given a Vietnamese phrase; I am going to try to say it. If I mess it up, feel free to laugh at me. *Xin chao cac ban*.¹

So much of the promise of this youthful nation is embodied with you. I learned that you have exchanges here with students from nearly 100 universities, from Canada to France to Korea, and that you are now hosting more than a dozen full-time students from your partner school in the United States, the University of California. I salute your vigorous efforts to engage the world.

Of course, like students everywhere, I know you have things to think about other than your studies. For example, in September you had to study for your classes and watch the Olympic accomplishments of Tran Hieu Ngan in Sydney. And this week you have to study and cheer Le Huynh Duc and Nguyen Hong Son in Bangkok at the football matches.

I am honored to be the first American President to see Hanoi and to visit this university. But I do so conscious that the histories of our two nations are deeply intertwined in ways that are both a source of pain for generations that came before and a source of promise for generations yet to come.

Two centuries ago, during the early days of the United States, we reached across the seas for partners in trade, and one of the first nations we encountered was Vietnam. In fact, one of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, tried to obtain rice seed from Vietnam to grow on his farm in Virginia 200 years ago. By the time World War II arrived, the United States had become a significant consumer of export from Vietnam. In 1945, at the moment of your country's birth, the words of Thomas Jefferson were chosen to be echoed in your own Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal. The Creator has

given us certain inviolable rights—the right to life, the right to be free, the right to achieve happiness."

Of course, all of this common history, 200 years of it, has been obscured in the last few decades by the conflict we call the Vietnam war and you call the American war. You may know that in Washington, DC, on our National Mall, there is a stark black granite wall engraved with the name of every single American who died in Vietnam. At this solemn memorial, some American veterans also refer to the "other side of the wall," the staggering sacrifice of the Vietnamese people on both sides of that conflict, more than 3 million brave soldiers and civilians.

This shared suffering has given our countries a relationship unlike any other. Because of the conflict, America is now home to one million Americans of Vietnamese ancestry. Because of the conflict, 3 million American veterans served in Vietnam, as did many journalists, embassy personnel, aid workers, and others who are forever connected to your country.

Almost 20 years ago now, a group of American servicemen took the first step to reestablish contacts between the United States and Vietnam. They traveled back to Vietnam for the first time since the war, and as they walked through the streets of Hanoi, they were approached by Vietnamese citizens who had heard of their visit. "Are you the American soldiers?" they asked. Not sure what to expect, our veterans answered, "Yes, we are." And to their immense relief, their hosts simply said, "Welcome to Vietnam."

More veterans followed, including distinguished American veterans and heroes who serve now in the United States Congress: Senator John McCain, Senator Bob Kerrey, Senator Chuck Robb, and Senator John Kerry from Massachusetts, who is here with me today, along with a number of Representatives from our Congress, some of whom are veterans of the Vietnam conflict.

When they came here, they were determined to honor those who fought, without refighting the battles; to remember our history, but not to perpetuate it; to give young people like you in both our countries the chance to live in your tomorrows, not in our yesterdays. As Ambassador Pete Peterson has

¹ Hello, everybody.